New Perspective in *PROSPECT*: An Assessment of Strengths and Weaknesses of Iranian Second Year Junior High School English Textbooks

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Abstract

Textbook design and evaluation has recently turned into a very important area in English Language Teaching. This paper evaluates the English textbooks taught in Iranian Junior high schools: Right Path to English which was the medium of instruction until 2013 and the recently designed textbook-*Prospect*-which replaced it. For this purpose, Tucker's (1975) textbook evaluation model was employed to conduct the research. The advantages and shortcomings of the textbooks are discussed in detail with reference to three major criteria extracted from this model. The results indicate that even though *Prospect* does not cover up some of the inadequacies and deficiencies of *RPE*, the development of a textbook based on Communicative Language Teaching syllabus is, to a great extent, a step forward towards constructing an up-to-date series for teaching English in Iranian schools. Results of this study have implications both for teaching and materials development.
Keywords: **Textbook evaluation, Tucker's model, Prospect 2, Right Path to English, Communicative Language Teaching**

1. Introduction

As one of the three fundamental facets of any educational context (the other two being learner and teacher), textbooks have always been viewed as a key element underlying teachers' decision making on what to teach and how to teach it. Riazi (2003) believes that "textbooks play a very pivotal role in the realm of language teaching and learning and are considered the next important element in the second /foreign language classroom after the teacher" (p. 21).

Material development and evaluation is a relatively new trend in the field of language teaching. In practical sense, it includes the construction, evaluation and adaptation of materials. Tomlinson (2001) defines materials as "anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of a language" (p. 66). Constant evaluation of textbooks to recognize their applicability is of great importance. This process allows us to make informed decisions through which students' achievement will improve and educational

programs will be more effective. Likewise, Genesee (2001) asserts that evaluation in TESOL settings is a process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information.

Several authors and researchers have proposed various textbook evaluation patterns or checklists to appraise different textbooks or materials. For instance, Ellis (1997) suggests that material evaluation could be conducted at three stages:

1) 'predictive' or 'pre-use' evaluation that is designed to examine the future or potential performance of a textbook;

2) 'in-use' evaluation designed to examine material that is currently being used; and

3) 'retrospective' or 'post-use' (reflective) evaluation of a textbook that is concerned with the evaluation of textbooks after they have been used in a specific institution or situation.

Most of the textbook evaluation studies carried out in Iran center around three main goals: the first group has mostly tried to develop some criteria to contribute to more successful textbook evaluation studies (Ansary & Babaii, 2002), the second group has evaluated certain textbooks for their strength and weakness to find their advantages and drawbacks (Kheibari, 1999; Shahedi, 2001; Yarmohammadi, 2002; Jahangard, 2007; Riazi & Aryashokouh, 2007), and the third group has studied discourse elements and the representation of discourse features in the textbooks (Amalsaleh, 2004; Darali, 2007).

Azizifar, Koosha, and Lotfi (2009) view textbooks as necessary resources for instructors to help learners in the learning process of every subject, including English, which plays a fundamental role in school instruction. They add that most of the input and language practice obtained by students is via textbooks in Iran. "For the EFL learners, the textbook becomes the major source of contact they have with the language, apart from the input provided by the teacher." (p. 67)

Although Borjian (2013) studies the roots and backgrounds of English education in Iran much before this time, many researchers believe that the history of formal teaching of English in Iran dates back to 1938-1939 (See for example Foroozandeh, 2010). The first English textbook series designed and published by the ministry of culture in academic year of 1938-9 included 6 books for 6 grades of high school education. Direct Method and Reading Method were adopted by the Iranian committee of writers of this series and a group of English speaking educators who launched and implemented this joint project under the sponsorship of the ministry of culture.

In the same vein, Foroozandeh (2010) maintains that "the 6-book series did not follow the same design and procedure in all the lessons. The 1939 series was not accompanied by any work book or teacher's manual, but the "foreword to teachers" provided comprehensive guidelines on classroom managements, student-teacher relationship, the importance and necessity of adopting a humanitarian approach to language teaching and learning, taking account of learner factors, error correction, and dictation"(p. 68).

This initial series was implemented until 1964 when it was replaced by a very well-known and widely discussed series called the *Graded English* series. *Graded English* which was also a six-book series was claimed to adopt the mainstream approach of its time (situational language teaching) and the textbooks were designed in a way that get the students acquainted with the basic knowledge and information of English necessary for daily life and future academic studies.

The *Graded English* series stayed in circulation of formal education system up until the Islamic revolution of 1979, when it was completely removed from the schools and replaced by other series, the most well-known one is *Right Path to English* which is still serving the education system and is planned to be replaced by the newly designed *English for School* series in the academic year commencing October 2013.

2. Significance of the Study

ELT practitioners believe that students' success in English language depends on various factors. One of these factors may relate to the features and the quality of textbooks applied in the process of English language teaching. The present study is conducted with the hope that knowledge of materials development can helpeducational authorities, textbook developers and teachers to find new ways for improving the quality of textbooks and consequently the quality of teaching and learning English in the country's educational system.

3. Research Questions

In this article, we mainly attempt to compare the characteristics of the new English textbook of Iran junior secondary level titled *Prospect* with the book titled *Right Path to English* which was implemented before the presentation of the new series. We try to examine if the modifications in the new series meet the objectives claimed by the authors as well as the students' demands.

As such, the present study sought to find answers to the following questions:

RQ1. How are the pronunciation points, content, and grammar dealt with in *Prospect 2*series?

RQ2. How are the pronunciation points, content, and grammar dealt with in *Right Path to English* series?

RQ3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of *Prospect 2* compared to *Right Path to English*?

RQ4. To what extent has the new textbook *(Prospect 2)* improved in terms of how it meets the students' needs?

4. Method
4.1. Design of the Study

In this study, data were obtained by qualitative method through two different sources, researchers' evaluations as well as the interviews with teachers. Triangulation, the use of multiple data collection methods, data sources or theories ascorroborative

evidence for the validity of research findings, helped to eliminate biases that might result from relyingexclusively on one data collection method (Gall et al., 1996).

4.2. Materials

The materials used in this study are the two locally produced series of English language textbooks distributed in Iranian Junior secondary schools, one which was previously taught and one which is planned to replace the old series. In this study and in order to be more specific, the researchers selected and focused on Book Two of junior secondary school from every one of these series. These books were used as the materials to be evaluated.

Therefore, the materials used were:

1. Book Two from the series of *Right Path to English* books by Birjandi and Soheili, published by the Ministry of Education in 2002.

2. Book Two from the series of *Prospect* written by Khadir Sharabian, KheirAbadi, AlaviMoghadam, Forouzandeh and NikouPour published by the Ministry of Education in 2014.

4.3. Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were 6 junior secondary school English language teachers. The teachers were both male and female from three schools and all of them had more than six years of teaching experience. Their teaching experiences ranged from 6 to 12 years. Two of these teachers had 12 years of teaching experience. Meanwhile, the other four teachers had taught English for at least six years. These six teachers were between 32-48 years old. They were asked to reflect on the efficiency of the recently developed English language textbook, *Prospect*, as well as the *Right Path to English* which was formerly taught in schools.

4.4. Instrument

To conduct the evaluation, a modified version of Tucker's (1975) evaluating model

was used. Tucker (1975) maintains that a system for evaluating textbooks should include basic linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical components. Consequently, he discusses four main categories: pronunciation, grammar, content, and general criteria. Each category has some subdivisions. Tucker's model emphasizes those elements which are generally considered vital to a structural syllabus. However, the researchers intend to go a bit further and evaluate the textbooks from the communicative language learning and teaching perspective. Thus, Tucker's model is modified to meet the objectives of this research. Since this study focuses on pronunciation, grammar, and content of the mentioned textbooks, the general criteria in Tucker's system are not directly relevant. Hence, they are excluded from the version adopted here.

The rating scheme used in this model is based on three scales:

1. The Value Scale (VS) which shows the relative weight assigned to each one of the mentioned criteria by the evaluator. It consists of a score of 0 to 5.

2. The Merit Scale (MS) which delineates the evaluator's judgment of the text in relation to any specific criterion. It ranges from 0 through 4 numerically. A score of 0 shows that the evaluator considers the text totally lacking any merit in that respect; conversely, a score of 4 reveals the ideality of the book's merit by a specific criterion.

3. The Value Merit Product (VMP), which is a combination of the importance of the criterion and the merit of the book.

The second instrument included a semi-structured interview with six experienced teachers. In order to support the evaluations of the first part, and increase the outcomes of the research, the researchers carried out the interview to talk directly with teachers who had experienced teaching the two books. The interview questions consisted of ten open-ended items. The items were intended to elicit the participants' insights regarding the previously instructed textbook

as well as the improvements made in the new textbook to fulfill the students' needs, teachers' expectations and curriculum goals. Each interview took around 30 minutes.

5. Discussion

This part presents the analyses and results of the data collected and their interpretations. As noted earlier, Tucker's (1975) modified model is applied to serve the purpose of the study. The data used in this study was collected through the analysis of *Prospect* and *Right Path to English* series used for the teaching of English in Iranian junior secondary school in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and content.

5.1. Pronunciation in RPE

The presentation of pronunciation is evaluated on the basis of three criteria: 1) completeness of presentation, 2) appropriateness of presentation, and 3) adequacy of practices.

5.1.1. Completeness of Presentation
a) Segmentals: Consonants, Vowels and Diphthongs
Consonants
Fries and Pike (Paulston & Bruder, 1976) classify English consonants as follows:/p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /š/, /ž/, /h/, /č/, /ĵ/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /r/, /l/, /w/, /y/. The consonants presented in *RPE* are: /s/, /k/, /d/, /t/,/ĵ/,/g/.

Considering the consonants of Fries and Pike's system, *RPE* does not present the following consonants:/p/, /b/, /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /z/, /š/, /ž/, /h/, /č/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /r/, /l/, /w/, /y/.No initial clusters are practiced in *RPE*.

Vowels
The following vowels are presented and practiced in book 2 of *RPE* series: /i/, /u/, /e/, /ə/. Considering the Fries-Pike's system, the vowels which are not introduced in GE are: /i:/, /u:/, /ə/, /^/, /æ/, /o/. The first three vowels do not exist in Persian; therefore, it should have been presented in a beginning book like *RPE*.

Diphthongs

The following diphthongs are presented and practiced in *RPE*: /əʊ/, /aʊ/, /aɪ/ and /ɪə/.

b) Suprasegmentals: Stress and Intonation

Stress and intonation are not presented in this book. As pointed out before, in *RPE* Book Two, pronunciation is mostly characterized with the articulation of individual and diphthong sounds. Consonants and vowels – both individual and diphthong sounds- are elements of English pronunciation presented in *RPE* Book Two. However, some important features are overlooked; stress, intonation, pitch, and juncture are not presented in the book. The justification for not allocating a section for the suprasegmental features in this book might be the fact that the book has been designed for the beginners; yet, highlighting some aspects of stress and intonation at the level of the word could be constructive even for beginners. Therefore, the score of the *RPE*'s merit– based on the presented rating scheme would be 1.5.

5.1.2. Appropriateness of Presentation

After analyzing the pronunciation items introduced in each unit of the book, it seems that the authors of *RPE* have tried to present the materials on the basis of a contrastive analysis of Persian and English. However, as far as the linguistic background of Persian students is concerned, many of the consonants and some of the vowels which are the areas of difficulty for Persian students are not dealt with in *RPE*, except for /əʊ/ and /aʊ/. The distinctions between /iː/, /i/ and /uː/, /u/ for instance have not been presented.

It appears that the contrastive analysis of Persian and English sound systems has been the source of the selection and gradation of the English sounds in *RPE*. Consequently, considering the inappropriate presentation of some English segments and also some pronunciation points which are difficult for Persian students, the merit score of *RPE*–based on the presented rating scheme- would be 1.5.

5.1.3. Adequacy of Practice

The only form in which the sound system of English is practiced in *RPE* is repetition drills. The learners are required to produce the sounds in words without having the opportunity to discriminate between similar sounds. Besides, all the vowels and consonants are presented in words, but words - and consequently the sounds - are not practiced in sentences. Tucker (1975) believes that the quantity of materials for pronunciation practice should be adequate. It is while difficult vowels for Persian speakers are not practiced adequately in *RPE*.

Since pronunciation is practiced through one technique, and the segmentals are practiced only in words, and finally since the practice of some sounds is not adequate as far as the CA of English and Persian sound systems is concerned, it would be justified to score *RPE*'s merit– based on the presented rating scheme- as 1 as far as the adequacy of practice is concerned.

5.2. Pronunciation in Prospect2

In *Prospect* 2 also pronunciation is evaluated on the basis of three criteria:
1) completeness of presentation,
2) appropriateness of presentation, and
3) adequacy of practices

5.2.1. Completeness of Presentation

a) Segmentals: Consonants, Vowels, and Diphthongs

Consonants

The following consonants are presented in *Prospect* 2: /č/, /š/, /l/, /θ/, /ð/, /f/, /ŋ/, /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /s/, /r/, /w/.

As it was mentioned earlier, Fries and Pike classify English consonants as follows: /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /š/, /ž/, /h/, /č/, /ĵ/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /r/, /l/, /w/, /y/.

Considering the consonants of this system, *Prospect 2* does not present the following consonants: /g/, /v/, /z/, /ž/, /h/, /ĵ/, /m/, /n/, /y/.

Initial clusters, including /fr/, /sp/, /br/, /st/, /pl/, /sw/, /pl/, /sw/ are also presented

and practiced in the book. The presentation and practice of the initial clusters add to the advantages of the recently designed book, *prospect 2*, compared to *RPE* which was previously being taught.

Vowels

The following vowels are presented and practiced in *Prospect 2*: / i/, /i:/, /u/ , /u:/, /e/, /ɜ:/

Considering the Fries-Pike's system, the following English vowels are not introduced and practiced in the book: /^/, /æ/, /o/.

Diphthongs

The following diphthongs are presented in *Prospect 2*: /əʊ/, /aʊ/, /eI/ and /Iə/

b) Suprasegmentals: Stress and Intonation

Stress and intonation are not presented in *Prospect 2* either.Similar to *RPE*, pronunciation in *Prospect 2* is mainly dealt with the articulation of individual and diphthong sounds. Vowels and consonants – both individual and diphthong sounds are features of English pronunciation presented in *Prospect 2*. However, some important features are absent; stress, intonation, pitch, and juncture are not presented in the book. Hence, the score of the *RPE*'s merit– based on the presented rating scheme would be 2.

5.2.2. Appropriateness of Presentation

The English language sounds are presented in *Prospect 2*, yet stress, intonation, pitch, and juncture and also some of the sounds like /æ/, and /o/ are absent in the book. Similar to *RPE*, the contrastive analysis of Persian and English sound systems has been the source for the selection and gradation of some of the English sounds in *Prospect2*; however the presentation of phonetic exercises is the distinctive feature of *Prospect* series which adds to its advantages. Sounds are being introduced in conversations which are designed to create

a more meaningful experience for the learners. In other words the repetition of the isolated words without the context is not the principal component of the pronunciation practice anymore. Another improvement of *Prospect* compared to the previously instructed book is the audio presentation of the sounds; here learners are given the opportunity to study and practice the sound system through the audio-visual recognition.

Considering the appropriate presentation of English segmentals and also some pronunciation featuress which are difficult for Persian students, the merit score of *Prospect 2*– based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.

5.2.3. Adequacy of Practice

Unlike *RPE*, repetition drills are not the form through which sound system is being practiced in *Prospect* series. In this book learners are expected to produce the sounds both in words and in sentences after they have listened to the correct pronunciation form. While pronunciation is practiced through just one technique – conversations- and the practice of some sounds is not adequate, the segmentals are practiced both in words and in sentences. Thus, it would be reasonable to score *RPE*'s merit– based on the presented rating scheme- as 2 as far as the adequacy of practice is concerned.

5.3. Grammar in RPE

The second issue dealt with is grammar. In this part, the grammar represented in *RPE* and *Prospect* series are evaluated. Grammar in *RPE* is analyzed and evaluated on the basis of the adequacy of pattern inventory, appropriate sequencing, adequacy of drill model and pattern displays, and finally adequacy of practice.

5.3.1. Adequacy of Pattern Inventory

In Book 2, the concentration is on the pasttense -simple and continuous-along with the distinction between mass and

count nouns. Also, Adverbs and object pronouns are being practiced. Moreover, possessive forms, such as "Ali's bag" and "the leg of the table," - and auxiliary verbs (can, may and should) are presented in the book. The final unit introduces future tense as well. Although there are some compound nouns in *RPE*, they are not distinguished from nouns as modifiers. Tucker (1975) believes that such a distinction should be included in any beginning text.

The presentation of grammatical patterns in *RPE* is acceptable enough to score its merit– based on the presented rating scheme- as 3.

5.3.2. Appropriate Sequencing
Although the verb "to be" is irregular, in majority of the available texts it is introduced very early because of its very high functional load. *RPE* seems to follow the same order; the first lesson which is the review of book 1has presented and practiced this structure. Since subject pronouns have been introduced in book 1, presenting object pronouns at the beginning of book 2 is justified in terms of the order of presentation.

Similarly, mass and count nouns and how many/much questions are the structures presented in lesson 3. First, mass and count nouns are distinguished; then, how many/much questions are introduced. Although these two successive structural features show an appropriate sequencing, how many/much questions do not appear in the remaining lessons. However, how many /much questions do appear in some of the drills in Book two; nevertheless, their appearance is a mechanical review of these structures. In fact, the learner is only reminded of the structures practiced earlier in the book.

Past tense verbs mark the basic tense system presented in Book 2. With respect to the sequencing of their presentation, regular verbs are introduced before the irregular verbsin simple past tense which makes sense considering the difficulty of the irregular verbs. Also past continuous is practiced after simple past which is an appropriate order.

As far as the context of presentation is concerned, *RPE* presents the structures as isolated and loosely related blocks. Occasionally, the blocks have no specific relationship and it is not clear why they are arranged in one way or another. Assuch, the merit score of sequencing in Book Two from the series of *RPE* – based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.5.

5.3.3. Adequacy of Drill and Pattern Displays
There are three kinds of drills in *RPE*. The titles that display these drills are "Oral drills", "Write it down", and "Speak out". Although there are models and examples for most of the drills to help the learners distinguish the exercises, some of the drills are merely clarified by explanations written in English. Yet, the age and level of the learners necessitate examples and not explanations per se. Basic structures of each lesson are displayed in boxes. The relationships between various patterns and the transformations that any specific structure may include are illustrated by arrows and small boxes.

From the onset of Book 2, explanations are given for some grammatical structures and the use of grammatical terminology is evident. As far as the level of the learners is concerned, explanations of this type are not needed. Moreover, the explanations may impel the learners to concentrate more on the grammarian's jargon than on aspects crucial to language learning. Some of the drills are accompanied by pictures. In addition, in some cases a reading text is given where a few parts are left out for the students to fill in with the required structure.

On the whole, drill models and pattern displays are adequate in *RPE*, and hence, its merit score would be 3.

5.3.4. Adequacy of Practice
As can be seen in table 1, mechanical drills form the majority of the drills in *RPE*. In

fact, Book 2 does not provide enough chance for the learners to practice the structures communicatively. Mechanical drills are presented more than meaningful and communicative drills.

Table 1. Classification of Drills
in *RPE*, Book Two

RPE Book TWo	Mechanical drills	Meaningful drills	Communicative drills	Total
	130	12	1	143

Table 2. Range of Various Types of Drills in *RPE*, Book Two

Types of Drills	Number
Mechanical	
Transformation	9
Verbatim repetition	11
Completion	22
Substitution drill	36
Reply	18
Expansion	8
Word order	9
Describing pictures	12
Integration	5
Meaningful	
Completion	12
Communicative	
Transformation	1

As Table 2 displays that there are two majortypes of drills in *RPE*, completion and substitution. These drills constitute more than half of all the drills in Book 2. In summary, there are mainly one class and two types of drills in *RPE*-mechanical, and completion and single slot substitution. The length of the drills seems appropriate. However, *RPE* does not present an adequate number of meaningful and communicative drills. The grammatical exercise introduced in the book could not help students to develop their communication abilities and, consequently, solve their communication difficulties in English. They do not seem to be communicative. They are only used to present the grammatical rules and features. Therefore, they cannot develop the students' communicative competence. Hence, *RPE*'s merit score – based on the presented rating scheme- would be 2.

5.4. *Grammar in Prospect 2*
5.4.1 Adequacy of Pattern Inventory
Book 2 offers present tense (present continuous and simple present), and modal verbs. In addition, adjectives, yes/no questions and wh-questions are introduced and practiced in the succeeding units of the book. Considering the organization of the grammatical features presented in the book as well as level of the students for which the book is designed, it seems fair to decide that the grammatical inventory is sufficient. Consequently, the score of *Prospect 2* in this respect would be 3.

5.4.2. Appropriate Sequencing
The initial grammatical structures presented in book 2 are yes/no questions and wh-questions. The simple past tense of the verb "to be" with its various forms is presented since the beginning of the book too. Then, simple present and the adverbs needed to talk about daily activities are presented. After that, the modal verb (can) in all its forms is dealt with. Other wh-questions are introduced next.

In Book 2, sequencing of the grammatical structures is not merely based on the level of their difficulty but they are presented in accordance with the functions they are supposed to serve, such as talking about health, describing a place, etc. In fact the order of presentation of grammatical features, to a large extent, depends on the basic, every day functions through which the structures are utilized. Taking into account the appropriate order of grammatical presentation in *Prospect 2*, its merit–based on the presented rating scheme- would be scored as 3.

5.4.3. Adequacy of Drill Model and Pattern Displays

As it was explained before, the grammar is not a separate component in *Prospect 2* and it doesn't serve the role of sequencing of the units either. It is assumed that the central element of the unit is its theme and function; hence grammar acts as the framework needed for the application of that particular function. To accomplish each task assigned to the students, they need to use the grammatical structure required for that task. On the whole, drill models and pattern displays are adequate in *Prospect 2*; hence, its merit score would be 3.

5.4.4. Adequacy of Practice

Table 3 classifies the drills in Book 2 from the series of *Prospect*. Moreover, as Table 4 indicates, the majority of the drills are of communicative type, in which the learners are required to perform the task with a friend.

Table 3. Classification of Drills in *Prospect 2*

Prospect 2	Mechani cal drills	Meaning ful drills	Communic ative drills	Total
	14	33	57	104

Table 4. Range of Various Types of Drills in *Prospect 2*

Types of Drills	Number
Mechanical	
Completion	7
Reply	7
Meaningful	
Completion	12
Reply	14
Two-stage drills	7
Communicative	
puzzle	7
Role paly	14
Transformation	1
Describing pictures	14
Reply	21

A variety of communicative exercises are presented to practice both the grammatical structures and the speaking skills of learners. The authors have tried to create a meaningful environment in which the tasks are being accomplished. The beneficial aspect of such exercises is to provide opportunities for learners to comprehend and produce language forms communicatively. In fact, they create a meaningful setting where the student can focus on the use of the forms required rather than their usage. As a consequence, practicing grammar can serve as a means towards enhancing learners' communicative competence.

One of the key principles of communicative pedagogy is to teach skills in anintegrated manner (Littlewood, 1981); it is because language learning is not learning the language skills solely and separately from each other. On the contrary, it is a combination of all the four skills together. What is evident in *Prospect 2* is an improvement in the approach it adopts towards teaching grammar which is considered an advantage over its predecessor. Grammar is not instructed separate from other components of the language. As it can be observed from the table, it is integrated as the requirement in accomplishment of the meaningful and communicative tasks of each unit. Therefore, score 3 would be assigned to the adequacy of practice in *Prospect 2*.

The third issue dealt with is content. In this section, the content represented in *Prospect* and *RPE* series are analyzed.

5.5. *Content in RPE*

This section aims at evaluating the content of *RPE* on the basis of functional load, rate and manner of entry and re-entry, and the appropriateness of contexts and situations.

5.5.1. Functional Load

Book 2 presents expressions such as "What does he look like?", "He doesn't feel well.", "Do you ever watch TV?" etc. Yet, the seexpressions are presented only once or

rarely twice throughout the book. The expressions used in every day conversations are not presented in book 2. It is while such expressions for talking about and describing daily activities must be and could be used much earlier. In other words, *RPE* does not benefit from the structures and expressions appropriately as far as functional load is concerned. Accordingly, its merit score would be 1.

5.5.2 Rate and Manner of Entry and Re-Entry

Book 2 does not present a quite balanced rate of entry of vocabulary. For example, Unit 8 presents 43 new words and expressions, while Unit 4 introduces only 18 new words. These two units present the most and the least numbers of new words in this book. As far as the reentry of grammatical structure is concerned, many grammatical structures are not re-presented in the succeeding units.

Moreover, some words and grammatical structures do not play active roles in various units though they are introduced in *RPE*. Accordingly, the *RPE*'s merit score would be 1.5 as far as the rate and manner of entry and re-entry are concerned.

5.5.3. Appropriateness of Contexts and Situations

RPE presents a lot of its vocabulary and grammatical features in isolated sentences. Evidently, isolated sentences could not present appropriate contexts and situations because it is possible to attach different meanings to an isolated sentence. Regarding the appropriateness of contexts and situations, the questions and answers in the dialogues seem to be artificial, because these questions and in general the topics dealt with in the dialogues do not seem to be a representation of the real world outside classroom.

Moreover, in some cases there is no relationship between one sentence and other sentences. In other words, one sentence breaks down with the propositional development of the dialogue. As such, it disturbs the coherence of the dialogue.

On the whole, *RPE* does not provide appropriate contexts and situations in the dialogues. In almost all of the *RPE* conversations, little attention is paid to those functions which often dominate in face-to-face interaction. Except for a few cases, a majority of dialogues in *RPE* suffer from the lack of cohesion and coherence.

Also, in nearly all of these dialogues, the emphasis is often on usage rather than use. As Cunning worth (1984) maintains the context has a crucial role in the communication and the learners should be able to use the skills effectively based on the nature of the interaction in the variety of combinations. However, the situations introduced in *RPE* do not possess the criteria for creating an interactive classroom environment.

Considering all of the above serious deficiencies, *RPE* lacks a lot as far as the appropriateness of contexts and situations is concerned and its score would be 1.

5.6. *Content in Prospect 2*

This section aims at evaluating the content of *Prospect* on the basis of the functional load, rate and manner of entry and re-entry, and appropriateness of contexts and situations.

5.6.1. Functional Load

Various expressions of "talking about daily activities, abilities, health problems, talking about places, etc." are introduced throughout Book 2. Expressions like "What do you do in the mornings?", "Are you good at drawing?", "What's wrong?", "What do you do in your free time?" seem to be relevant to the actual communicative needs of the learners.

Evidently, these expressions are presented as formulas and their structures are not analyzed for the learners. They are first introduced in the dialogue of each unit; the contexts and situations in which these expressions are employed are much more authentic than the ones utilized in RPE. Furthermore, they give students a variety of

opportunities to express themselves in different areas, all of which relate to their daily needs. The expressions are native like, that is, they are not merely employed for the sake of the usage of a particular grammatical point.

Naturally, *RPE* presents some words, expressions, and structures with respect to their functional load. However, a serious concern is reflected regarding the choice of the photos and pictures used along with the conversations. One problem with the pictures used in this book is their ambiguity as far as the content of the following dialogue is concerned. For instance, the picture presented in unit 7 of the book displays a classroom whit students and the teacher. While the conversation followed is between a teacher and a student, the main theme of the conversation is talking about hobbies. Since no visual element pertaining to the theme is seen in the picture, it could be concluded that the picture could be used in any other conversation as well and it does not act as a supplementary visual aid. The other problem with the photos utilized in the book is that they lack the attraction desired for the targeted age group. Consequently, RPE's merit would be scored as 3.

5.6.2. Rate and Manner of Entry and Re-Entry
The rate of introducing new words in the units of *Prospect 2* ranges from 10 to 20, but a majority of the units introduce one to three grammatical structures. Such a rate of entry of grammatical structures seems to be sufficient because it supports Tucker's suggestion (1975) that in early units, vocabulary should be introduced carefully. For instance, the simple present tense is presented in unit one of Book 2and it is re-presented throughout the book. In this respect, Tucker (1975) remarks that if a verb tense is introduced, it should play a substantial part in the majority of the units. In *Prospect 2*, the presentation of the mentioned grammatical structures follows such a manner.

RPE, on the whole, introduces the structure properly, and the introduction of vocabulary and expressions is in line with the functional goal they serve.

On the other hand, the re-entry of structures is appropriately handled. Therefore, its merit score would be 3.

5.6.3. Appropriateness of Contexts and Situations
Prospect 2 offers a systematic presentation of dialogues. Each of the units of Book 2 consists of a dialogue which is accompanied by pictures. Dialogues of Book 2, entirely or partially, demonstrate the English language use. If a question is asked in these dialogues, it is not for displaying a grammatical feature, but for the manipulation of language in communication. Additionally, the contexts and situations presented in this book are much more real life and authentic than the ones in *RPE*. In summary, the dialogues in *Prospect* basically deal with English use. On this basis, *RPE*'s merit – based on the presented rating scheme would be scored as 3.

5.7. *Analysis of the Interviews*
After collecting data and transcribing the interview responses, the data were interpreted to produce the findings of the study. The major results of teachers' responses to the interview questions showed that the majority of the answers given to the interview questions were to some extend similar. The results of analysis and interpretations of the interview responses are as follows:

5.7.1 RPE from the teachers' perspective
The results of the interview from teachers revealed that *RPE* is a structure based textbook which cannot meet the curriculum goals and the students' needs. *RPE* has only emphasized on reading skill while the communicative role of the language is ignored. Several dialogues in the book serve the English language usage and do not focus on the uses of English in actual

situations. In other words, they do not seem to be communicative. In fact, the book does not help to develop the students' communicative competence. Thus, the students are not able to use the language appropriately in different situations and contexts outside the classroom.

Meanwhile, there is no focus on the culture of foreign language countries where English is spoken as the native language. The themes and content of the textbook do not provide students with an opportunity to get familiar with the traditions, customs and cultural events of the target language people.

One of the most important weaknesses of this textbook is that it is taught in the students' native language. The textbook is designed in a way that teachers feel obliged to use students' native language to make the process of comprehension easier for them. Teachers even usually use Persian to describe drill models, give examples, or explain the meaning of difficult activities. Since no vocabulary learning technique is employed in the book, the meaning of the new words introduced in each unit is also given in Persian by the teacher. Also the words are only presented in one unit and are not repeated and used in the preceding and following units. As a result, students lose the opportunity to see the words in a variety of contexts, and, consequently, forget the presented words very quickly.

Another problem with *RPE* is related to the layout of the book. There are no visual aids such as pictures, no use of different colors, and no type of illustrations which can facilitate students' comprehension and learning. As Cunnings worth (1984) holds "what we should look for is a good balance between visual material and written text, so that each supports the other" (p. 57).Thus, inadequate visual aids make the lessons boring.

5.7.2. Prospect from the teachers' perspective
Teachers' notions of the recently developed textbook, *Prospect 2*, centered around three main themes. Firstly, the integration of skills, which is the one of the fundamental principles of CLT, has been taken into consideration in presenting the new materials. As Little wood (1981) maintains one of the key principles of communicative pedagogy is to teach skills in an integrated manner. To this end, the conversation at the beginning of each lesson is combined with listening; also the practice questions consist of speaking and listening. The writing section of each lesson is accompanied by listening; and the concluding task in the lesson is presented as an integration of reading, speaking and writing.

Using tasks as the organizational principle of the lesson was the other topic teachers agreed upon. Contrary to *RPE*'s framework, which was a structure based syllabus, *Prospect* is following a task based approach toward teaching the language; that is grammar is now introduced only as much as needed to support the development of the other skills. Teaching of grammar is not explicit anymore. Some proponents Of CLT (see Long 1985; Nunan2004) propose using tasks as central units that form the basis of daily and long-term lesson plans. It is evident that tasks make the process of learning meaningful, thus they are in line with another principle of CLT which calls for the authenticity of the materials to be instructed. Based on Widdowson's (2007) definition of authenticity, language-made-for-learning is considered authentic as it is real for the context of learning.

Another advantage of *Prospect* over *RPE*, in teachers' perspective, was developing the CD of the printed material. Although *Prospect*'s CD has been recorded with the voice of non-native speakers, still it is considered a major breakthrough when compared to a syllabus designed to teach English language without any audio materials. Keeping in mind the incompetency of some teachers, especially when it comes to

pronunciations, having a CD along with the book can ensure that teachers' mispronunciations can no longer mislead students.

However, The choice pictures in the textbook was criticized by the teachers, since they believed that they lack the element of attraction they are supposed to serve.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to compare and contrast Book 2 from the series of Right Path to English (*RPE*) and the recently introduced book *Prospect 2*. The advantages and shortcomings of each series were evaluated for pronunciation, grammar, and content on the basis of Tucker's (1975) evaluation model.

Based on the analysis of the two textbooks, the researchers found a considerable difference between *RPE* and *Prospect*. The major difference lies in the content criteria in which *RPE* has several serious inadequacies. However, *Prospect* does not entirely accomplish *RPE*'s deficiencies in the domain of pronunciation.

RPE is best approved on the grammar criterion. This reveals the fact that it is essentially based on the structural views of syllabus design in which teaching grammar is a much esteemed priority. In other words, *RPE* does not operate beyond the structural syllabus.

It is evident that *Prospect*'s superiority over *RPE* is the application of a communicative methodology; that is, *prospect* practices the communicative language teaching syllabus in some respect. If we consider the seventh criterion (adequacy of practice) in which communicative aspects of drills, on the basis of Paulston and Bruder (1976) classification of grammar exercises are also taken into account, *RPE* gains the least merit in the area of grammar. In other words, *RPE* does not present and practice the English grammar as far as communicative competence is concerned.

The inadequacies of *RPE* with regard to the communicative aspects of language

teaching – or specifically syllabus design and text construction–are much more revealed in applying the content criteria, and specially the tenth criterion which examines the appropriateness of contexts and situations. In this respect, *RPE* lacks any merit while *Prospect* succeeds more in realizing the communicative goals of the textbook.

As it was stated earlier, the authors of *Prospect* claimed that they had tried to incorporate the recent improvement in language teaching and learning in designing *Prospect*. The results of this study indicate that *Prospect* did employ the recent improvement only in some areas. It achieves better scores in the grammar and the content criteria.

On the whole, the results of this study reveal that *Prospect* does not cover up some of the shortcomings and deficiencies of *RPE*. Moreover, it fails to incorporate the recent findings in syllabus design and text construction. Nonetheless, the development of *Prospect* is, to a great extent, a step forward towards designing an up-to-date textbook for teaching English in Iranian schools.

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Appendix
Tucker (1975) Textbook Evaluation Model

I. INTERNAL CRITERIA
PRONUNCIATION CRITERIA
Completeness of presentation
Appropriateness of presentation
Adequacy of practice

GRAMMAR CRITERIA
Adequacy of pattern inventory
Appropriate sequencing
Adequacy of drill model & pattern display
Adequacy of practice

CONTENT CRITERIA
Functional load
Rate & manner of entry & reentry
Appropriateness of contexts and situations

II. EXTERNAL CRITERIA
Authenticity of language
Availability of supplementary materials
Adequate guidance for non-native teachers
Competence of the author
Appropriate level for integration
Durability
Quality of editing and publishing
Price & Value